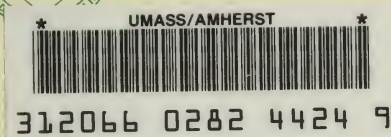


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MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF
LIBRARY
COMMISSIONERS

Preservation Program

Preservation is the basic responsibility to provide adequate facilities for the protection, care, and maintenance of library and archival materials.

MENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

A. 1. 1-1996

University of Massachusetts
Depository copy

History

Some of the richest written and printed information resources in the United States including significant documentation of Massachusetts' history and political, social, and economic development that dates back to the seventeenth century reside in libraries, archives, town clerks' offices, historical societies, museums, public records offices, and manuscript repositories throughout the Commonwealth. Unfortunately, even in these institutions that are dedicated to caring for and providing access to this information, many documents, books, photographs, pamphlets, ephemera, and electronic media are at risk from the dangers of unstable environments, poor storage and handling, natural and man-made disasters, and chemical degradation.

MBLC Preservation Program

To begin to address these preservation and access problems in the Commonwealth's repositories, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners' (MBLC) Preservation Program was established in 1988 to develop and implement a statewide preservation program. Working with the Massachusetts Archives and numerous constituents in the Commonwealth under a grant funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities Division of Preservation and Access, the MBLC published *Preserved to Serve: The Massachusetts Preservation Agenda* in 1992. This document serves as a framework for implementing a preservation program for all types of library and archival repositories in the Commonwealth.

Information Gathering

The preservation staff of the MBLC has conducted two surveys, The Massachusetts Preservation Needs Assessment Survey (1990) and the Critical Collections Survey (1994) to identify and address the preservation needs of the Commonwealth's cultural heritage. The 1990 survey enabled the MBLC and others in the field to focus on the specific areas where lack of information, training, or action has put the Commonwealth's cultural heritage at risk. The 1994 survey has resulted in a directory of critical collections or resources in the Commonwealth that are in specific need of preservation as well as an identification of the major areas of preservation affecting the Commonwealth's collections.

One of the key areas identified by The Massachusetts Preservation Needs Assessment Survey and by the Massachusetts Task Force on Preservation and Access, in preparation for the publication of *Preserved To Serve*, is the lack of preservation knowledge among librarians, archivists, town clerks, curators, and others responsible for the care and handling of collections. This information and knowledge is crucial to the preservation of important historic documents and volumes. The MBLC has embarked upon an active preservation education program for records and book custodians statewide.

Consultant Services

The Collection Management/Preservation Specialist at the MBLC is available either by telephone or on-site to librarians and archivists statewide to provide advice in numerous areas of preservation including:

- Disaster preparedness planning
- Basic repair of library and archival materials
- The care and handling of library and archival materials
- Commercial library binding as a preservation option
- Library and archival security
- Preservation surveys
- Local history and special collections

Resources

The MBLC has compiled a collection of library and archival supply catalogs to serve as a source of information for librarians, archivists, curators, town clerks, and others responsible for caring for books, papers, and public records who are seeking preservation supplies. In addition, the staff has incorporated many archival and preservation supplies into the regional cooperative supply list that is available to libraries and archives throughout the Commonwealth. The staff will respond to inquiries by telephone and by mail regarding types of materials to employ and the various sources from which they are available.

As disaster, or emergency, preparedness plans are developed by libraries and archives throughout the Commonwealth, copies are being filed with the MBLC as a resource for others embarking on the process of generating their own plan. Furthermore, the MBLC staff also serves as a point of information for staff having questions about the mechanics of creating such a plan. Staff at the MBLC is also available to advise librarians and archivists on environmental concerns specific to storage areas such as light, temperature, relative humidity, and atmospheric pollutants, as well as construction issues that are applicable to preservation. This becomes particularly important during new construction, renovations, and additions to libraries and other facilities.

Workshops and Other Educational Opportunities

Working with the public library regional systems and other organizations, the MBLC offers half-day and full-day preservation workshops in the areas mentioned above. These workshops can be tailored to meet the needs of specific audiences or be presented to a mixed group of librarians, archivists, historical society personnel, town clerks, and others. Furthermore, the staff is available to address groups of interested citizens on preservation issues to build support for the activities of professionals instituting a preservation program in their institutions.

The MBLC also produces a calendar every other month of preservation educational opportunities offered throughout New England.

Anyone wishing to have a program listed or to receive a copy of the calendar should contact the MBLC or should dial into the Massachusetts Library and Information Network where the preservation calendar is listed.

In conjunction with the Massachusetts Archives and the Northeast Document Conservation Center, the MBLC serves as a Clearinghouse for preservation information in Massachusetts. As part of its role as an information source, the MBLC's bimonthly newsletter, *MBLC Notes*, includes a column, "The Preservation Inquirer," that addresses preservation issues by responding to questions raised by librarians and archivists in the field. Occasionally, longer, more in-depth articles appear as well.

Funding

As part of its commitment to the preservation of Massachusetts' cultural heritage, the MBLC has made some of its federal Library Services and Construction Act funds available for preservation projects in Massachusetts libraries. Furthermore, the MBLC compiles information on Federal grants that may be applied to preservation projects from the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.

For further information please contact:

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Fax: (617) 421-9833